

J. COLE

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• GELLIBRAND •

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J, COLE.




HENRY ALTEMUS COMPANY

J. COLE

GELLIBRAND

PHILADELPHIA

Merry Christmas
From Your friend
J E Chilton



EMMA GELLIBRAND

J. COLE

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9. M. S. May, 1918

J. COLE.

"HONNERD MADAM,

"Wich i hav seed in the paper a page Boy wanted, and begs to say J. Cole is over thertene, and I can clene plate, wich my bruttther is under a butler and lerned me, and I can wate, and no how to clene winders and boots. J. Cole opes you will let me cum. I arsk 8 and all found. if you do my washin I will take sevven. J. Cole will serve you well and opes to give sattisfaxshun. i can cum tomorrer.

J. COLE.

"P.S.—He is not verry torl but growin. My bruttther is a verry good hite. i am sharp and can rede and rite and can hadd figgers if you like."

CHAPTER I.

I HAD advertised for a page-boy, and having puzzled through some dozens of answers, more or less illegible and impossible to understand, had come to the last one of the packet, of which the above is an exact copy.

The epistle was enclosed in a clumsy envelope, evidently home-made, with the aid of scissors and gum, and was written on a half-sheet of letter-paper, in a large hand, with many blots and smears, on penciled lines.

There was something quaint and straightforward in the letter, in spite of the utter ignorance of grammar and spelling; and while I smiled at the evident pride in the "brutther" who was a "verry good hite," and the offer to take less wages if "I would do his washin," I found myself wondering what sort of a waif upon the sea of life was this not very tall person, over thirteen, who "would serve me well."

I had many letters to answer and several appointments to make, and had scarcely made up my mind whether or not to trouble to write to my accomplished correspondent, who was "sharp, and could rede and rite, and hadd figgers," when, a shadow falling on the ground by me as I sat by the open window, I looked up, and saw, standing opposite my chair, a boy—the very smallest boy, with the very largest blue eyes I ever saw. The clothes on his little limbs were evidently meant for somebody almost double his size, but they were clean and tidy.

In one hand he held a bundle, tied in a red handkerchief, and in the other a

bunch of wild-flowers that bore signs of having traveled far in the heat of the sun, their blossoms hanging down, dusty and fading, and their petals dropping one by one on the ground.

“Who are you, my child?” I said, “and what do you want.”

At my question the boy placed his flowers on my table, and, pulling off his cap, made a queer movement with his feet, as though he were trying to step backwards with both at once, and said, in a voice so deep that it quite startled me, so strangely did it seem to belong to the size of the clothes, and not the wearer,—

“Please, ’m, it’s J. Cole; I’ve come

to live with yer. I've brought all my clothes, and everythink."

For the moment I felt a little bewildered, so impossible did it seem that the small specimen of humanity before me was actually intending to enter anybody's service; he looked so childish and wistful, and yet with a certain honesty of purpose shining out of those big, wide-open eyes, that interested me in him, and made me want to know more of him.

"You are very small to go into service," I said, "and I am afraid you could not do the work I should require; besides, you should have waited to hear

from me, and then have come to see me, if I wanted you to do so."

"Yes, I know I'm not very big," said the boy, nervously fidgeting with his bundle; "leastways not in hite; but my arms is that long, they'll reach ever so 'igh above my 'ed, and as for bein' strong, you should jest see me lift my father's big market basket when it's loaded with 'taters, or wotever is for market and I hope you'll not be angry because I come to-day; but Dick—that's my brutther Dick—he says, 'You foller my advice, Joe,' he says, 'and go arter this 'ere place, and don't let no grass grow under your feet. I knows what it is goin' arter places; there's such lots of

fitin' after 'em, that if you lets so much as a hour go afore yer lookes 'em up, there's them as slips in fust gets it; and wen yer goes to the door they opens it and sez, 'It ain't no use, boy, we're sooted;' and then where are yer, I'd like to know? So,' sez he, 'Joe, you look sharp and go, and maybe you'll get it.' So I cum, mum, and please, that's all."

"But about your character, my boy," I said. "You must have somebody to speak for you, and say you are honest, and what you are able to do. I always want a good character with my servants; the last page-boy I had brought three years' good character from his former situation."

“Lor!” said Joe, with a serious look, “did he stay three years in a place afore he came to you? Wotever did he leave them people for, where he were so comfortable? If I stay with you three years, you won’t catch me a leavin’ yer, and goin’ somewhere else. Wot a muff that chap was!”

I explained that it did not always depend on whether a servant wanted to stay or not, but whether it suited the employers to keep him.

“’Praps he did somethin’, and they giv’ ’m the sack,” murmured Joe; “he was a flat!”

“But about this character of yours,” I said; “if I decide to give you a trial,

although I am almost sure you are too small, and won't do, where am I to go for your character? Will the people where your brother lives speak for you?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the little fellow, his cheeks flushing; "I know Dick'll ask 'em to give me a caricter. Miss Edith, I often cleaned 'er boots. Once she came 'ome in the mud, and was a-goin' out agin directly; and they was lace-ups, and a orful bother to do up even; and she come into the stable-yard with 'er dog, and sez: 'Dick, will you chain Tiger up, and this little boy may clean my boots if he likes, on my feet?' So I cleaned 'em, and she giv' me sixpence; and after that, when the boots came down in the

mornin', I got Dick always to let me clean them little boots, and I kep 'em clean in the insides, like the lady's maid she told me not to put my 'ands inside 'em if they was black. Miss Edith, she'll giv' me a caricter, if Dick asks 'er."

Just then the visitors' bell rang, and I sent my would-be page into the kitchen to wait until I could speak to him again, and told him to ask the cook to give him something to eat.

"Here are your flowers," I said; "take them with you."

He looked at me, and then, as if ashamed of having offered them, gathered them up in his hands, and with the

corner of the handkerchief wiped some leaves and dust-marks off my table, then saying in a low voice, "I didn't know you 'ad beauties of yer own, like them in the glass pots, but I'll giv' 'em to the cook." So saying, he went away into the kitchen, and my visitors came in, and by and by some more friends arrived.

The weather was very warm, and we sat chattering and enjoying the shade of the trees by the open French window. Presently, somebody being thirsty, I suggested lemonade and ice, and I offered strawberries, and (if possible) cream; though my mind misgave me as to the latter delicacy, for we had sev-

eral times been obliged to do without some of our luxuries if they entailed "*fetching*," as we had no boy to run errands quickly on an emergency and be useful. However, I rang the bell; and when the housemaid, whose temper, since she had been what is curiously termed in servant's-hall language "single-handed," was most trying, entered, I said "Make some lemonade Mary, and ask cook to gather some strawberries quickly, and bring them, with some cream."

Mary looked at me as who should say, "Well, I'm sure! and who's to do it all? You'll have to wait a bit." And I know we should have to wait, and therefore

resigned myself to do so patiently, keeping up the ball of gossip, and wondering if a little music later on would perhaps while away the time.

Much to my amazement, in less than a quarter of an hour Mary entered with the tray, all being prepared; and directly I looked at the strawberry-bowl I detected a novel feature in the table decoration. A practiced hand had evidently been at work; but whose? Mary was far too matter-of-fact a person. Food, plates, knives and forks, glasses, and a cruet-stand were all she ever thought necessary; and even for a center vase of flowers I had to ask, and often to insist, during the time she was single-handed.

But here was my strawberry-bowl, a pretty one, even when unadorned, with its pure white porcelain stem, intertwined with a wreath of blue convolvulus, and then a spray of white, the petals just peeping over the edge of the bowl, and resting near the luscious red fruit; the cream-jug, also white, had twining flowers of blue, and round the lemonade-jug, of glass, was a wreath of yellow blossoms.

“How exquisite!” exclaimed we all. “What fairy could have bestowed such a treat to our eyes and delight to our sense of the beautiful?”

I supposed some friend of the cook’s or Mary’s had been taking lessons in the

art of decoration, and had given us a specimen.

Soon after, my friends having gone, I thought of J. Cole waiting to be dismissed, and sent for him.

Cook came in and with a preliminary "Ahem!" which I knew of old meant, "I have an idea of my own, and I mean to get it carried out," said, "Oh, if you please, 'm (if I might be so bold), did you think serious of engagin' the boy that's waitin' in the kitchen?"

"Why do you ask, Cook?" I said.

"Well, ma'am," she replied, trying to hide a laugh, "of course it's not for me to presume; but if I might say a word for him, I think he's the very handiest

and the sharpest one we've ever had in this house, and we've had a many, as you know. Why if you'd only have seen him when Mary come in in her tantrums at 'aving to get the tray single-handed, and begun a-grumblin' and a-bangin' things about, as is her way, being of a quick temper, though, as I tells her, too slow a-movin' of herself. As I were a-sayin', you should have seen that boy. If he didn't up and leave his bread and butter and mug of milk, as he was a-enjoyin' of as 'arty as you like, and, 'Look 'ere,' says he, 'giv' me the jug. I'll make some fine drink with lemons. I see Dick do it often up at his place. Giv' me the squeezer. Wait till I

washes my 'ands. I won't be a minnit.' Then in he rushes into the scullery, washes his hands, runs back again in a jiffy. 'Got any snow sugar? I mean all done fine like snow.' I gave it him; and, sure enough, his little hands moved that quick, he had made the lemonade before Mary would have squeezed a lemon. 'Where do yer buy the cream?' he says next. 'I'll run and get it while you picks the strawberries.' Perhaps it wasn't right, me a-trustin' him, being a stranger, but he was that quick I couldn't say no. Up he takes the jug and was off; and when I come in from the garden with the strawberries, if he hadn't been and put all them flowers on

the things. He begs my pardon for interfering like, and says, 'I 'ope you'll excuse me a-doin' of it, but the woman at the milk-shop said I might 'ave 'em; and I see the butler where Dick lives wind the flowers about like that, and 'ave 'elped 'm often; and, please, I paid for the cream, because I'd got two bob of my own, Dick giv' me on my birthday. Oh, I do 'ope, Mrs. Cook,' he says, 'that the lady'll take me; I'll serve 'er well, I will, indeed;' and then he begins to cry and tremble, poor little chap, for he'd been running about a lot, and never eaten or drank what I gave him, because he wanted to help, and it was hot in the kitchen, I suppose, and he felt faint like,

but there he is, crying; and just now, when the bell rung, which was two big boys after the place, he says, 'Oh, please say "We're sooted," and ask the lady if I may stay.' So, I've taken the liberty, ma'am," said Cook, "for somehow I like that little chap, and there's a deal in him, I do believe."

So saying, Cook retired; and in a moment, J. Cole was standing in her place, the blue eyes brimming over with tears, and an eager anxiety as to what his fate would be making his poor little hands clutch at his coat-sleeves, and his feet shuffle about so nervously, that I had not the courage to grieve him by a refusal.

“Well, Joseph,” I said, “I have decided to give you a month’s trial. I shall write to the gentleman who employs your brother; and if he speaks well of you, you may stay.”

“And may I stay now, please?” he said. “May I stay before you gets any answer to your letter to say I’m all right? I think you’d better let me; there ain’t no boy; and Mrs. Cook and Mary’ll ’ave a lot to do. I can stay in the stable, if you don’t like to let me be in the house, afore you writes the letter.”

“No, Joe,” I replied; “you may not be a good, honest boy, but I think you are; and you shall stay here. Now go back to Mrs. Wilson and finish your

milk, and eat something more if you can, then have a good rest and a wash; they will show you where you are to sleep, and at dinner, this evening, I shall see if you can wait at table."

"Thank you very kindly," said the boy, his whole face beaming with delight, "and I'll be sure and do everything I can for you." Then he went quickly out of the room; for I could see he was quite overcome, now that the uncertainty was over.

Alone once more, I reasoned with myself, and felt I was doing an unwise thing. Just at that time my husband was away on business for some months; and I had no one to advise me, and no

one to say to me nay either. My conscience told me my husband would say, "We cannot tell who this boy is, where he has lived, or who are his associates; he may be connected with a gang of thieves for what we know to the contrary. Wait, and have proper references before trusting him in the house."

And he would be right to say so to me, but not every one listens to conscience when it points the opposite way to inclination. Well, J. Cole remained; and when I entered the dining-room, to my solitary dinner, he was there, with a face shining from soap and water, his curls evidently soaped too, to make them go tidily on his forehead. The former

page having left his livery jacket and trousers, Mary had let Joe dress in them, at his earnest request.

She told me afterwards that he had sewn up the clothes in the neatest manner wherever they could be made smaller; and the effect of the jacket, which he had stuffed out in the chest with hay, as we discovered by the perfume, was very droll. He had a great love of bright colors, and the trousers being large, showed bright red socks; the jacket sleeves being much too short for the long arms, of which he was so proud, allowed the wristbands of a vivid blue flannel shirt to be seen.

I was alone, so could put up with this

droll figure at my elbow; but the seriousness of his face was such a contrast to the comicality of the rest of him, that I found myself beginning to smile every now and then, but directly I saw the serious eyes on me, I felt obliged to become grave at once.

The waiting at table I could not exactly pronounce a success; for, although Joe's quick eyes detected in an instant if I wanted anything, his anxiety to be "first in the field," and give Mary no chance of instructing him in his duties, made him collide against her more than once in his hasty rushes to the sideboard and back to my elbow with the dishes, which he generally handed to me

long before he reached me, his long arms enabling him to reach me with his hands while he was yet some distance from me, and often on the wrong side. I also noticed when I wanted water he lifted the water-bottle on high, and poured as though it was something requiring a head. Mary nearly caused a catastrophe at that moment by frowning at him, and saying, *sotto voce*, "Whatever are you doing? Is that the way to pour out water? It ain't hale, stupid!"

Joe's face became scarlet; and to hide his confusion he seized a dish-cover, and hastily went out of the room with it, returning in a moment pale and serious as became one who at heart was every inch

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a family butler with immense responsibilities.

Joe was quiet and sharp, quick and intelligent; but I could see he was quite new to waiting at table. To remove a dish was, I could see, his greatest dread; and it amused me to see the cleverness with which he managed that Mary should do that part of the duty.

When only my plate and a dish remained to be cleared away, he would slowly get nearer as I got towards the last morsel, and before Mary had time, would take my plate, and go quite slowly to the sideboard with it, leisurely remove the knife and fork, watching meanwhile in the mirror if Mary was about to take

the dish away; if not he would take something outside, or bring a decanter, and ask if I wanted wine.

I was, however, pleased to find him no more awkward, as I feared he would have been, and when, having swept the grate and placed my solitary wineglass and dessert-plate on the table, he retired, softly closing the door after him, I felt I should make something of J. Cole, and hoped his character would be good.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning a tastefully arranged vase of flowers in the centre of the breakfast-table, and one magnificent rose and bud by my plate, were silent but eloquent appeals to my interest on behalf of my would-be page; and when Joe himself appeared, fresh from an hour's self-imposed work in my garden, I saw he had become quite one of the family; for Bogie, my little terrier, usually very snappish to strangers, and who considered all boys as his natural enemies, was leaping about his feet, evidently asking for more games, and our

old magpie was perched familiarly on his shoulder.

“Good-morning, Joe,” I said. “You are an early riser, I can see, by the work you have already done in the garden.”

“Why, yes,” replied Joe, blushing, and touching an imaginary cap; “I’m used to bein’ up. There was ever so much to do of a mornin’ at ’ome; and I ’ad to ’elp father afore I could go to be with Dick, and I was with Dick a’most every mornin’ by seven, and a good mile and a arf to walk to ’is place. Shall I bring in the breakfast, mum? Mary’s told me what to do.”

Having given permission, Joe set to work to get through his duties, this time

without any help, and I actually trembled when I saw him enter with a tray containing all things necessary for my morning meal, he looked so overweighted; but he was quite equal to it as far as landing the tray safely on the sideboard. But, alas! then came the ordeal; not one thing did poor Joe know where to place, and stood with the coffee-pot in his hand, undecided whether it went before me, or at the end of the table, or whether he was to pour out my coffee for me.

I saw he was getting very nervous, so took it from him, and in order to put him at ease, I remarked,—

“I think, perhaps, I had better show

you, Joe, just for once, how I like my breakfast served, for every one has little ways of their own, you know; and you will try to do it my way when you know how I like it, won't you ? ”

Thereupon I arranged the dishes, etc., for him, and his big eyes followed my every movement. The blinds wanted pulling down a little presently, and then I began to realize one of the drawbacks in having such a very small boy as page. Joe saw the sun's rays were nearly blinding me, and wanted to shut them out; but on attempting to reach the tassel attached to the cord, it was hopelessly beyond his reach. In vain were the long arms stretched to their utmost, till the

sleeves of the ex-page's jacket retreated almost to Joe's elbows, but no use.

I watched, curious to see what he would do.

"Please 'm, might I fetch an 'all chair?" said Joe; "I'm afraid I'm not big enuf to reach the tossle, but I won't pull 'em up so 'igh to-morrow."

I gave him permission, and carefully the chair was steered among my tables and china pots. Then Joe mounted, and by means of rising on the tips of his toes he was able to accomplish the task of lowering the blinds.

I noticed at that time that Joe wore bright red socks, and I little thought what a shock those bright-colored hose

were to give me later on under different circumstances.

That evening I had satisfactory letters regarding Joe's character, and by degrees he became used to his new home, and we to him. His quaint sayings and wonderful love of the truth, added to extreme cleanliness, made him welcome in the somewhat exclusive circle in which my housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson, reigned supreme.

Many a hearty burst of laughter came to me from the open kitchen-window across the garden in the leisure hour, when, the servants' tea being over, they sat at work, while Joe amused them with his stories and reminiscences of the say-

ings and doings of his wonderful brother Dick.

This same Dick was evidently the one being Joe worshipped on earth, and to keep his promises to Dick was a sacred duty.

“You don’t know our Dick, Mrs. Wilson,” said Joe, to the old housekeeper; “if you did, you’d understand why I no more dare go agen wot Dick told me, than I dare put my ’and in that ’ere fire. When I were quite a little chap, I took some big yaller plums once, out of one of the punnits father was a-packin’ for market, and I eat ’em. I don’t know to this hour wot made me take them plums; but I remember they were such prime

big uns, big as eggs, they was, and like lumps of gold, with a sort of blue shade over 'em. Father were very particular about not 'avin' the fruit 'andled and takin' the bloom off, and told me to cover 'em well with leaves. It was a broilin' 'ot day, and I was tired, 'avin' been stoopin' over the baskits since four in the morning, and as I put the leaves over the plums I touched 'em; they felt so lovely and cool, and looked so juicy-like, I felt I must eat one, and I did; there was just six on 'em, and when I'd bin and eat one, there seemed such a empty place left in the punnit, that I knew father'd be sure to see, so I eat 'em all, and then threw the punnit to one

side. Just then, father comes up and says, 'Count them punnits, Dick! there ought to be forty on 'em. Twenty picked large for Mr. Moses, and twenty usuuls for Marts!'—two of our best customers they was. Well, Dick, he counts 'em, and soon misses one. 'Thirty-eight, thirty-nine,' he sez, and no more; 'but 'ere's a empty punnit,' he sez. I was standing near, feelin' awful, and wished I'd said I'd eat the plums afore Dick begun to count 'em, but I didn't, and after that I couldn't. 'Joe!' sez Dick, 'I wants yer! 'Ow comes this empty punnit 'ere, along of the others? there's plums bin in it, I can see, 'cos it's not new. Speak up, youngster!' I looked

at Dick's face, Mrs. Wilson, and his eyes seemed to go right into my throat, and draw the truth out of me. 'Speak up,' he sez, a-gettin' cross; 'if you've prigged 'em, say so, and you'll get a good hidin' from me, for a-doin' of it; but if you tells me a *lie*, you'll get such a hidin' for *that* as'll make you remember it all your life; so speak up, say you did it, and take your hidin' like a brick, and if you didn't prig 'em, say who did, 'cos you must 'ave seen 'em go.'

"I couldn't do nothing', Mrs. Wilson, but keep my 'ed down and blubber out, 'Please Dick, I eat 'em.'

"Oh, you did, yer young greedy, did yer,' he sez 'I'm glad yer didn't tell me

a lie. I've got to giv' yer a hidin'', Joe; but giv' us yer 'and, old chap, first, and mind wot I sez to yer: "*Own up to it, wotever you do,*" and take your punishment; it's 'ard to bear, but when the smart on it's over yer forgets it; but if yer tells a lie to save yerself, yer feels the smart of *that* always; yer feels ashamed of yerself whenever yer thinks of it.' And then Dick give me a thrashin', he did, but I never 'ollered or made a row, tho' he hit pretty 'ard. And, Mrs. Wilson, I never could look in Dick's face if I told a lie, and I never shall tell one, I 'ope, as long as ever I live. You should just see Dick, Mrs. Wilson, he is a one-er, he is."

“Lor’ bless the boy,” said Mary, the housemaid; “why, if he isn’t a-cryin’ now. Whatever’s the matter? One minnit you’re making’ us larf fit to kill ourselves, and then you’re nearly makin’ us cry with your Dick, and your great eyes runnin’ over like that. Now get away, and take the dogs their supper, and see if you can’t get a bit of color in your cheeks before you come back.”

So off Joe went, and soon the frantie barking in the stable-yard showed he had begun feeding his four-footed pets.

Time went on; it was a very quiet household just then—my husband away in America, and my friends most of them enjoying their summer abroad, or

at some seaside place—all scattered here and there until autumn was over, and then we were to move to town, and spend the winter season at our house there. I hoped my dear sister and her girls would then join us, and, best of all, my dear husband would be home to make our circle complete.

Day by day Joe progressed in favor with everybody; his size was always a trouble, but his extreme good nature made everybody willing to help him over his difficulties. He invented all sorts of curious tools for reaching up to high places; and the marvels he would perform with a long stick and a sort of claw at the end of it were quite astonishing.

I noticed whenever I spoke of going to town Joe did not seem to look forward to the change with any pleasure, although he had never been to London, he told me; but Dick had been once with his father, and had seen lots of strange things; among others a sad one, that made a great impression on Dick, and he had told the tale to Joe, so as to have almost as great an effect on him.

It appeared that one night Dick and his father were crossing Waterloo Bridge, and had seen a young girl running quickly along, crying bitterly. Dick tried to keep up with her, and asked her what was the matter. She told him to let her alone, that she meant

to drown herself, for she had nothing to live for, and was sick of her life. Dick persuaded her to tell him her grief, and heard from her that her mother and father had both been drowned in a steamer, and she was left with a little brother to take care of; he had been a great trouble to her, and had been led away by bad companions until he became thoroughly wicked. She had been a milliner, and had a room of her own, and paid extra for a little place where her brother could sleep. She fed and clothed him out of her earnings, although he was idle, and cruel enough to scold and abuse her when she tried to reason with him, and refused to let him

bring his bad companions to her home. At last he stole nearly all she had, and pawned it; and among other things, some bonnets and caps belonging to the people who employed her, given as patterns for her to copy. These she had to pay for, and lost her situation besides. By degrees all her clothes, her home, and all she had, went for food; and then this wicked boy left her, and the next thing she knew was that he had been taken up with a gang of burglars concerned in a jewel robbery. That day she had seen him in prison, and he was to be transported for seven years; so the poor creature, mad with grief, was about to end her life. Dick and his father would **not**

leave her until she was quiet, and promised them she would go and get a bed and supper with the money they gave her, and they promised to see her again the next day at a place she named. The next morning they went to the address, and found a crowd around the house. Somebody said a young woman had thrown herself out of a window, and had been taken up dead. It was too true; and the girl was the wretched, heart-broken sister they had helped over night. Her grief had been too much for her, and, poor thing, she awoke to the light of another day, and could not face it alone and destitute; so, despairing, she had ended her life. They went to the

hospital, and were allowed to see all that remained of the poor creature; and Dick's description of it all, and his opinion that the brother "might have been just such another little chap at first as Joe," and "What would that brother feel," said Dick, "when he knew what he had done? for he done it," said Dick; "he done that girl to death, the same as if he'd shov'd her out of that winder hisself."

"And," said Joe, "I wonder if them chaps is goin' about London now wot led her brother wrong? I don't like London; and I wish we could stop 'ere."

I assured Joe that in London there was no danger of meeting such people

if he kept to himself, and made no friends of strangers.

Joe was also much afraid of having to wait at table when there were guests. In spite of all I could do, he was hopelessly nervous and confused when he had to wait on more than two or three people; and as I expected to entertain a good deal when we were in town, I could not help fearing Joe would be unequal to the duties.

I could not bear the idea of parting with the little fellow, for, added to his good disposition, Joe, in his dark brown livery, with gilt buttons, his neat little ties, and clean hands; his carefully brushed curls, by this time trained into

better order, and shining like burnished gold in the sun; his tiny feet, with the favorite red socks, which he could and did darn very neatly himself when they began to wear out (and when he bought new ones they were always bright red), —Joe, let me tell you, was quite an ornament in our establishment, and the envy of several boys living in families round about, who tried in vain to get acquainted with him, but he would not be friends, although he always refused their advances with civil words.

Sometimes a boy would linger when bringing a note or message for me, and try to draw Joe into conversation. In a few minutes I would hear Joe's deep

voice say, "I think you had better go on now. I've got my work to do, and I reckon you've got yours a-waiting for yer at your place." Then the side-door would shut, and Joe was bustling about his work.

CHAPTER III.

IN the beginning of October we arrived in London. There had been much packing up, and much extra work for everybody, and Joe was in his element.

What those long arms, and that willing heart, and those quick little hands got through, nobody but those he helped and worked for could tell. Whatever was wanted Joe knew where to find it. Joe's knife was ready to cut a stubborn knot; Joe's shoulders ready to be loaded with as heavy a weight as any man could carry. More than once I met him coming down-stairs with large

boxes he himself could almost have been packed in, and he declared he did not find them too heavy.

“You see, Missis,” he said, “I’m that strong now since I’ve been here, with all the good food I gets, and bein’ so happy like, that I feel almost up to carryin’ anythink. I do believe I could lift that there pianner, if somebody would just give it a hoist, and let me get hold of it easy.”

Yes, Joe was strong and well, and I am sure, happy, and I had never had a single misgiving about him since he stood with his fading flowers and shabby clothes at my window that summer day.

At last we were settled in town, and

the winter season beginning. Our house was situated in the West End of London, a little beyond Bayswater. One of a row of detached houses, facing another row exactly similar in every way, except that the backs of those we lived in had small gardens, with each its own stable wall at the end, with coachman's rooms above, the front of the stable facing the mews, and having the entrance from there; the mews ran all along the backs of these houses. On the opposite side the houses facing ours had their gardens and back windows facing the high-road, and no stables. There was a private road belonging to this, Holling Park as it was called, and a watchman to keep

intruders out, and to stop organ-grinders, beggars, and such invaders of the peace from disturbing us.

Somehow I was never as comfortable as in my snug cottage in the country. Rich, fashionable people lived about us, and all day long kept up the round of "society life."

In the morning the large handsome houses would seem asleep, nothing moving inside or out, except a tradesman's cart, calling for orders, or workmen putting up or taking down awnings, at some house where there would be, or had been, a ball or entertainment of some kind. About eleven a carriage or two would be driven round from the mews,

and stop before a house to take some one for a morning drive; but very seldom was anybody on foot seen about. In the afternoon it was different, carriages rolled along incessantly, and streams of afternoon callers were going and coming from the houses when the mistress was "at home;" and at my door, too, soon began the usual din of bell and knocker. Joe was quite equal to the occasion, and enjoyed Friday, the day I received. Dressed in his very best, and with a collar that kept his chin in what seemed to me a fearful state of torture, but added to his height by at least half an inch, Joe stood behind the hall-door, ready to open it directly the knocker was released.

He ushered in the guests as though "to the manner born," giving out the names correctly, and with all the ease of an experienced groom of the chambers.

The conservatory leading out of the drawing-room was Joe's especial pride; it was his great pleasure to syringe the hanging baskets, and attend to the ferns and plants. Many shillings from his pocket-money were spent in little surprises for me in the form of pots of musk, maiden-hair, or anything he could buy; his wages were all sent home, and he only kept for his own whatever he had given to him, and sometimes a guest would "tip" him more generously than I liked for his bright eyes and ready

hands were always at everybody's service.

After my husband's return home—who from the first became Joe's especial care, as to boots, brushing of clothes, etc.—it became necessary to give two or three dinner-parties, and I must confess I felt nervous as to how Joe would acquit himself.

In our dining-room was a very large bear-skin rug, and the floor being polished oak, it was dangerous to step on this rug, for it would slip away from the feet on the smooth surface, and even the dogs avoided it, so many falls had they met with upon it.

The first day of my husband's arrival

we had my sister and a friend to dine, and had been talking about Joe in the few moments before dinner.

My husband had been laughing at the size of my page, and scolding me a little, or rather pretending to do so, for taking a written character.

“Little woman,” he said, “don’t be surprised if one night a few country burglars make us a visit, and renew their acquaintance with Mr. J. Cole.”

“You don’t know Joe,” I replied, “or you would never say that.”

“Do you know him so well, little wife?” said my dear sensible husband; “remember he has only been in our service six months. In the country he had

very little of value in his hands, but here, it seems to me, he has too much. All the plate, and indeed everything of value, is in his pantry, and he is a very young boy to trust. One of the women servants should take charge of the plate-chest, I think. Where does this paragon sleep?"

"Down-stairs," I said, "next to the kitchen, at the back of the house; and you should see how carefully every night he looks to the plate-basket, counts everything and then asks Mrs. Wilson to see it is right, locks it up, and gives her the key to take care of. No one can either open or carry away an iron safe easily, and there is nothing else worth taking; besides, I know Joe is honest, I feel it."

“Well,” I hope so, dear,” was my husband’s reply, but I could see he was not quite comfortable about it.

At dinner that day Joe had an accident; he was dreadfully nervous, as usual, and when waiting, he forgot to attend to my guests first, but always came to me. The parlor-maid, a new one, and not a great favorite with Joe, made matters worse by correcting him in an audible voice; and once, when somebody wanted oyster-sauce, she told Joe to hand it. The poor boy, wishing to obey quickly, forgot to give the bear-skin a wide berth, slipped on it, and in a moment had fallen full length, having in his fall deposited the contents of the

sauce-tureen partly into a blue leather armchair, and the rest onto my sister's back.

The boy's consternation was dreadful. I could see he was completely overcome with fright and sorrow for what he had done. He got up, and all his trembling lips could say was, "Oh, please, I'm so sorry; it was the bear as tripped me up. I am so very sorry."

Even my husband could scarcely keep from smiling, the sorrow was so genuine, the sense of shame so true.

"There, never mind, Joe," he said kindly; "you must be more careful. Now run and get a sponge, and do the best you can with it."

After that Joe had the greatest terror of that treacherous skin, and I heard him telling the parlor-maid about it.

“ You mind,” he said, “ or that bear’ll ketch ’old of her. I shant’ forget how he ketched ’old of my leg that day and knocked me over; so you’d better take care, and not go nigher than you can ’elp. He’s always a-lookin’ out to ketch yer, but he won’t ’ave me no more, I can tell him.”

This fall of Joe’s made him still more nervous of waiting at table, and at last, when he had made some very serious mistakes, I had to speak to him and tell him I was afraid, if he did not soon learn to wait better, I must send him away, for

his master was annoyed at the mistakes he made, such as pouring port instead of sherry, giving cold plates when hot ones were required, handing dishes the wrong side, etc.

My little lecture was listened to quietly and humbly, and Joe had turned to go away, when, to my surprise and distress, he suddenly burst into a perfect passion of tears and sobs.

“I will try and learn myself,” he said, as well as his sobs would let him, “indeed I will. I know I’m stoopid. I sez to myself every time company comes, ‘I’ll mind wot I’m about, and remember dishes left-’anded, pourin’s out right, sherry wine’s yeller, and port wine after-

wards with the nuts, grapes, and things; and the cruits when there's fish, and begin with the strangerest lady next to master's side, and 'lp missus last.' I knows it all, but when they're all sittin' down, and everybody wantin' somethin', I don't know if Jane's a-goin to giv' it 'em, or I am; and I gets stoopid, and my 'ands shakes, and somehow I can't do nothin'; but please don't send me away. I do like you and the master. I'll ask Jane to learn me better. You see if I don't. Oh, please 'm, say you'll try me!"

What could I say but "yes," and for a day or two Joe did better, but we were a small party, and the waiting was easy;

but shortly we were to have a large dinner-party, and as the time drew near, Joe became quite pale and anxious.

About this time, too, I had been awakened at night by curious sounds downstairs, as of somebody moving about, and once I heard an unmistakable fall of some heavy article.

My husband assured me it was nothing alarming, and he went down-stairs. but could neither hear or see anything unusual. All was quiet.

Another night I felt sure I heard sounds downstairs; and in spite of my husband's advice to remain still, I called Mrs. Wilson, and entreated her to come down to the kitchen-floor with me. It

was so very easy, I knew, for anybody to enter the house from the back, and there being a deep area all around, they could work away with their tools at the ground-floor back windows unseen. Any one could get on the top of the stable from the mews, drop into the garden, and be safe; for the watchman and policeman were on duty in the front of the house only, the back was quite unprotected. True, there were iron bars to Joe's window and the kitchen, but iron bars could be sawed through, and I lived in dread of burglars.

This night Mrs. Wilson and I went softly down, and as we neared the kitchen stairs, I heard a voice say in a whisper, "Make haste!"

“There, Mrs. Wilson, did you hear that?” I said.

“No, ma’am,” she replied; “there’s somebody talking, and I believe it’s in Joe’s room. Let us go up and fetch the master.”

So we returned up-stairs, and soon my husband stood with us at the door of Joe’s room.

“Open the door, Joe!” cried my husband. “Who have you got there?”

“Nobody, please sir,” said a trembling voice.

“Open the door at once!” said the master, and in a moment it was opened. Joe stood there very pale, but with no sort of fear in his face. There was no-

body in the room, and as Joe had certainly been in bed, we concluded he must have talked in his sleep, and, perhaps, walked about also, for what we knew.

The day before the dinner-party, Cook came and told me she felt sure there was something wrong with Joe. He was so changed from what he used to be; there was no getting him to wake in the morning, and he seemed so heavy with sleep, as if he had no rest at night. Also Cook had proofs of his having been in her kitchen after he was supposed to have gone to bed; chairs were moved, and several things not where she had left them. She had asked Joe, and he replied he did go into the kitchen, but would not say what for.

I did not like to talk to Joe that day, so decided to wait till after the dinner, and I would then insist on the mystery being cleared up. I knew Joe would tell the truth; my trust was unshaken, although circumstances seemed against him.

That night Mrs. Wilson came to my door, and said she was sure Joe was at his night-work again, for she could see from her bedroom window a light reflected on the stable wall, which must be in his room.

“How can we find out,” I said, “what he is doing?”

“That is easily done,” said my husband. “We can go out at the garden-

door, and down the steps leading from the garden into the area; they are opposite his window. We can look through the venetian blinds, if they are down, and see for ourselves. He won't be able to see us."

Accordingly, having first wrapped up ~~in~~ our furs, we went down, and were soon at Joe's window, standing in the area that surrounded the house. The laths of the blind were some of them open, and between them we saw distinctly all over the room.

At first we could not understand the strange sight that met our gaze.

In the middle of Joe's room was a table, spread with a cloth, and on it sau-

eers from flower-pots, placed at intervals down each side; before each saucer a chair was placed, and in the center of the table a high basket, from which a Stilton cheese had been unpacked that morning, this was evidently to represent a tall *epergne*. On Joe's washstand were several bottles, a jug, and by each flower-pot saucer two vessels of some kind—by one, two jam-pots of different sizes; by another, a broken specimen glass and a teacup—and so on; and from chair to chair moved Joe, softly but quickly, on tiptoe, now with bottles which contained water. We could see his lips move, and concluded he was saying something to imaginary persons, for he would put a

jampot on his tray, and pour into it from the bottle, and then replace it. Sometimes he would go quickly to his bed, which we saw represented the dinner-wagon, or sideboard, and bring imaginary dishes from there and hand them. Then he would go quickly from chair to chair, always correcting himself if he went to the wrong side, and talking all the time softly to himself. So here was the solution of the mystery; here melted into air the visions of Joe in league with midnight burglars.

The poor boy, evidently alarmed at the prospect of the dinner-party, and feeling that he must try to improve in waiting at table before that time some-

how, had stolen all those hours nightly from his rest, to practice with whatever substitutes were at hand for the usual table requisites.

Here every night, when those who had worked far less during the day were soundly sleeping, had that anxious, striving little heart shaken off fatigue, and the big blue eyes refused to yield to sleep, in order to fight with the nervousness that alone prevented his willing hands acting with their natural cleverness. I felt a choking in my throat, when I saw the thin, pale little face, that should have been on the pillow hours before, lighted up with triumph as the supposed guests departed; the dumb show

of folding the dinner napkins belonging to myself and the master, and putting them in their respective rings, told us the ordeal was over. What a weird scene it was,—the dim light, the silent house, the spread table, and the empty chairs! One could imagine ghostly revelers, visible only to that one fragile attendant, who ministered so willingly to their numerous wants. The sort of nervous thrill that heralds hysterical attacks was rapidly overcoming me, and I whispered to my husband, "Let us go now;" but he lingered a few seconds, and silently drew my attention again to the window.

Joe was on his knees by his bedside, his face hidden in his hands. What sil-

ent prayer was ascending to the Throne of Grace, who shall say? I only know that it were well if many a kneeling worshipper in "purple and fine linen" could feel as sure of being heard as Joe did when, his victory won, he knelt, in his humble servant's garb, and said his prayers that night in spite of the aching head and weary limbs that needed so badly the few hours' rest that remained before six o'clock, the time Joe always got up.

Silently we stole away, and in my mind from that moment my faith in Joe never wavered. Not once, in spite of sad events that came to pass later on, when even I, his staunchest friend, had to recall to memory that kneeling little

form in the silence of the night, alone with his God, in order to stifle the cruel doubts of his truth that were forced upon us all by circumstances I must soon relate.

The famous dinner passed off well. Joe was splendid; his midnight practice had brought its reward, and he moved about so swiftly, and anticipated everybody's wants so well, that some of my friends asked me where I got such a treasure of a page; he must have had a good butler or footman to teach him, they said; he is evidently used to waiting on many guests. I was proud of Joe.

The next day he came to me with more than a sovereign in silver, and told

me the gentlemen had been so very kind to him, "and a'most everyone had given him somethin' tho' he never arst, or waited about, as some fellers did, as if they wouldn't lose sight of a gent till he paid 'em. But," said Joe, "they would giv' it me; and one gent, he follered me right up the passage, he did, and sez, 'Ere, you small boy,' he sez, and he give me a whole 'arf-crown. Whatever for, I don't know."

But I knew that must have been Dr. Loring, a celebrated physician, and my husband's dearest friend. We had told him about Joe's midnight self-teaching, and he had been much interested in the story.

You little thought, Joe, the hand that patted your curly head so kindly that night would one day hold your small wrist, and count its feeble life-pulse beating slowly and yet more slowly, while we, who loved you, should watch the clever, handsome face, trying in vain to read there the blessed word "Hope."

CHAPTER IV.

AND now I must confess to those—for surely there will be a few—who have felt a little interest, so far, in the fortunes of J. Cole, that a period in my story has arrived when I would fain lay down my pen, and not awaken the sleeping past, to recall the sad trouble that befell him.

I am almost an old woman now, and all this happened many years ago, when my hair was golden instead of silver. I was younger in those days, and now am peacefully and hopefully waiting God's good time for my summons. Troubles have been my lot, many and

hard to bear. Loss of husband, children, dear, good friends, many by death, and some troubles harder even than those, the loss of trust, and bitter awakening to the ingratitude and worthlessness of those in whom I have trusted,—all these I have endured. Yet time and trouble have not sufficiently hardened my heart that I can write of what follows without pain.

Christmas was over, and my dear husband again away for some months. As soon as I could really say, "Spring is here," we were to leave London for our country home; and Joe was constantly talking to Mrs. Wilson about his various pets, left behind in the gardener's care.

There was an old jackdaw, an especial favorite of his, a miserable owl, too, who had met with an accident, resulting in the loss of an eye; a more evil-looking object than "Cyclops," as my husband christened him, I never saw. Sometimes on a dark night this one eye would gleam luridly from out the shadowy recesses of the garden, and an unearthly cry of "Hoo-oo-ot," fall on the ear, enough to give one the "creeps for an hour," as Mary, the housemaid, said. But Joe loved Cyclops, or rather "Cloppy," as he called him; and the bird hopped after Joe about the garden, as if he quite returned the feeling.

All our own dogs, and two or three

maimed ones, and a cat or two, more or less hideous, and indebted to Joe's mercy in rescuing them from traps, snares, etc.,—all these creatures were Joe's delight. Each week the gardener's boy wrote a few words to Joe of their health and wonderful doings, and each week Joe faithfully sent a shilling, to be laid out in food for them. Then there was Joe's especial garden, also a sort of hospital, or convalescent home rather, where many blighted, unhealthy-looking plants and shrubs, discarded by the gardener, and cast aside to be burnt on the weed-heap, had been rescued by Joe, patiently nursed and petted as it were into life again by constant care and watching,

and, after being kept in pots a while, till they showed, by sending forth some tiny shoot or bud, that the sap of life was once more circulating freely, were then planted in the sheltered corner he called "his own."

What treasures awaited him in this small square of earth. What bunches of violets he would gather for the Missis; and his longing to get back to his various pets, and his garden, was the topic of conversation on many a long evening between Joe and Mrs. Wilsor

Little Bogie, the fox-terrier, was the only dog we had with us in town, and Bogie hated London. After the quiet country life, the incessant roll of car-

riages, tramping of horses, and callings of coachmen, shrill cab-whistles, and all the noises of a fashionable neighborhood at night during a London season, were most objectionable to Bogie; he could not rest, and often Joe got out of bed in the night, and took him in his arms, to prevent his waking all of us with his shrill barking at the unwonted sounds.

As I have said before, I am very nervous, and the prospect of spending several more weeks in the big London house, without my husband, was far from pleasant; so I invited my widowed sister and her girls to stay with me some time longer, and made up my mind to banish my fears, and think of nothing but that

the dark nights would be getting shorter and shorter, and meanwhile our house was well protected, as far as good strong bolts and chains could do so.

One night I felt more nervous than usual. I had expected a letter from America for some days past, and none had arrived. On this evening I knew the mail was due, and I waited anxiously for the last ring of the postman at ten o'clock; but I was doomed to listen in vain. There was the sharp, loud ring next door, but not at ours; and I went to my room earlier than the others, really to give way to a few tears that I could not control.

I sat by my bedroom fire, thinking,

and, I am afraid, conjuring up all sorts of terrible reasons for my dear husband's silence, until I must have fallen asleep, for I woke chilly and cramped from the uncomfortable posture I had slept in. The fire was out, and the house was as silent as the grave; not even a carriage passing to take up some late guest. I looked at the clock, half-past three, and then from my window. It was that "darkest hour before dawn," and I hurried into bed, and endeavored to sleep; but no, I was hopelessly wide awake. No amount of counting, or mental exercise on the subject of "sheep going through a hedge," had any effect, and I found myself lying awake, listening.

Yes, I knew that I was *listening for something that I should hear before long, but I did not know what.*

“Hark! what was that?”—a sudden thud, as if something had fallen somewhere in the house; then silence, except for the loud beating of my heart, that threatened to suffocate me. “Nonsense,” I said to myself, “I am foolishly nervous to-night. It is nothing here, or Bogie would bark;” so I tried again to sleep. Hush! Surely that was a foot-step going up or down the stairs! I could not endure the agony of being alone any longer, but would go to my sister’s room, just across the landing, and get her to come and stay the rest of the

night with me. I put on my slippers and dressing-gown, and opening my door, came face to face with my sister, who was coming to me.

"Let me come in," she said, "and don't let us alarm the girls; but I feel certain something is going on downstairs. Bogie barked furiously an hour ago and then was suddenly silent."

"That must have been when I was asleep," I replied; "but no doubt Joe heard him, and has taken him in."

"That may be," said my sister, "but I have kept on hearing queer noises at the back of the house; they seemed in Joe's room at first. Come and listen yourself on the stairs."

It is strange, but true, that many persons, horribly nervous at the thought of danger, find all their presence of mind in full force when actually called upon to face it. So it is with me, and so it was on that night. I stood on the landing and listened, and in a few moments heard muffled sounds down-stairs, like persons moving about stealthily.

“There is certainly somebody down there, Nelly,” I said to my sister, “and they are down in the basement. If we could creep down quietly and get into the drawing-room, we might open the window and call the watchman or policeman; both are on duty until seven.”

“But think,” said my sister, “of the

fright of the girls if they hear us, and find they are left alone. The servants, too, will scream, and rush about, as they always do. Let us go down and make sure there are thieves, and then see what is best to be done. The door at the top of the kitchen stairs is locked, so they must be down there; and perhaps if we could get the watchman to come in quietly, we might catch them in a trap, by letting him through the drawing-room, and into the conservatory. He could get into the garden from there, and as they must have got in that way from the mews, or over the stable wall, and through the garden, they would try to escape the same way, and the watchman

would be waiting for them, and cut off their retreat."

I agreed, and we stole downstairs into the drawing-room, where we locked ourselves in, then very gently and carefully drew up one of the side blinds of the bay window. The morning had begun to break, and everything in the wide road was distinctly visible. In the distance I could see the policeman on duty, but on the opposite side, and going away from our house instead of towards it. He would turn the corner at the top of the road, and go past the houses parallel with the backs of our row, and then appear at the opposite end of the park, and come along our side; there was no intermediate

turning—nothing but an unbroken row of about forty detached houses facing each other.

What could we do? I dared not wait until the policeman came back; quite twenty minutes must pass before then, and day being so near at hand, the light was increasing every moment, and the burglars would surely not leave without visiting the drawing-room and dining-room, and would perhaps murder us to save themselves from detection.

If I could only attract the policeman's attention, but how?

My sister was close to the door listening, and every instant we dreaded hearing them coming up the kitchen stairs.

I could not understand Bogie not barking, and Joe not waking, for where I was I could distinctly hear the men moving about in the pantry and kitchen.

"I wonder," I said to my sister, "if I could put something across from this balcony to the stonework by the front steps? It seems such a little distance, and if I could step across, I could open the front gate in an instant, and run after the policeman. I shall try."

"You will fall and kill yourself," my sister said; "the space is much wider than you think."

But I was determined to try; for if I let that policeman go out of sight, what horrors might happen in the twenty

minutes before he would come back. The idea of one of the girls waking and calling out, or Joe waking and being shot or stabbed, gave me a feeling of desperation, as though I alone could and must save them.

Luckily the house was splendidly built, every window-sash sliding noiselessly and easily in its groove. I opened the one nearest to the hall door steps and saw that the stone ledge abutted to within about two feet of the low balcony of the window; but I was too nervous to trust myself to spring across even that distance. At that moment my sister whispered :

“I hear somebody coming up the kitchen stairs!”

Desperately I cast my eyes around the room for something to bridge the open space, that would bear my weight, if only for a moment. The fender-stool caught my eye; that might do, it was strong, and more than long enough. In an instant we had it across, and I was out of the window and down the front steps.

As I turned the handle of the heavy iron gate, I looked down at the front kitchen window. A man stood in the kitchen, and he looked up and saw me—such a horrible looking ruffian, too. Fear lent wings to my feet, and I flew up the road. The watchman was just entering the park from the opposite end;

he saw me, and sounded his whistle; the policeman turned and ran towards me. I was too exhausted to speak, and he caught me, just as, having gasped "Thieves at 50!" (the number of our house), I fell forward in a dead swoon.

When I recovered, I was lying on my own bed, my sister, the scared servants, and the policeman, all around me. From them I heard that directly the man in the kitchen caught sight of me, he warned his companion, who was busy forcing the lock of the door at the head of the kitchen stairs, and my sister heard them both rushing across the garden, where they had a ladder against the stable wall. They must have pulled this up

after them, and tossed it into the next garden, where it was found, to delay pursuit. The park-keeper had, after sounding his whistle, rushed to our house, got in at the window, and ran to the door at the top of the kitchen stairs, but it was quite impossible to open it; the burglars had cleverly left something in the lock when disturbed, and the key would not turn. He then went through the drawing-room into the conservatory, where a glass door opened on the garden; but by the time the heavy sliding glass panel was unfastened, and the inner door unbolted, the men had disappeared. They took with them much less than they hoped to have done, for there

were parcels and packets of spoons, forks, and a case of very handsome gold salt-cellars, a marriage gift, always kept in a baize lined chest in the pantry, the key of which I retained, and which chest was supposed until now to be proof against burglars; the lock had been burnt all round with some instrument, most likely a poker heated in the gas, and then forced inwards from the burnt wood-work.

“How was it,” I asked, “Joe did not wake during all this, or Bogie bark?”

As I asked the question, I noticed that my sister turned away; and Mrs. Wilson, after vainly endeavoring to look unconcerned, threw her apron suddenly over her head, and burst out crying.

“What is the matter?” I said, sitting up; “what are you all hiding from me? Send Joe to me; I will learn the truth from him.”

At this the policeman came forward, and then I heard that Joe was missing, his room was in great disorder, and one of his shoes, evidently dropped in his hurry, had been found in the garden, near some spoons thrown down by the thieves; his clothes were gone, so he evidently had dressed himself after pretending to go to bed as usual; his blankets and sheets were taken away, used no doubt, the policeman said, to wrap up the stolen things.

“Is it possible,” I asked, “that you

suspect Joe is in league with these burglars?"

"Well, mum," said the man, "it looks queer, and very like it. He slept down-stairs close to the very door where they got in; he never gives no alarm, he must have been expecting something, or else why was he dressed? And how did this shoe come in the garden? And what's more to the point, if so he as he's innocent, where is he? These young rascals is that artful, you'd be surprised to know the dodges they're up to."

"But," I interrupted, "it is impossible, it is cruel to suspect him. He is gone, true enough, but I'm sure he will come back. Perhaps he ran after the

men to try and catch them, and dropped his shoe then."

"That's not likely, mum," said he, with a pitying smile at my ignorance of circumstantial evidence; "he'd have called out to stop 'em, and it 'aint likely they'd have let him get up their ladder, afore chucking of it into the next garden, if so be as he was a-chasing of 'em to get 'em took. No, mar'm; I'm very sorry, particular as you seem so kindly disposed; but, in my humble opinion, he's a artful young dodger, and this 'ere job has been planned ever so long, and he's connived at it, and has hooked it along with his pals. I knows 'em, but we'll soon nab him; and if so be as you'll

be so kind as to let me take down in writin' all you knows about 'J. Cole,' which is his name, I'm informed, where you took him from, his character, and previous career, it will help considerable in laying hands on him; and when he's found we'll soon find his pals."

Of course I told all I knew about Joe. I felt positive he would come back, perhaps in a few minutes, to explain everything. Besides, there was Bogie, too. Why should he take Bogie? The policeman suggested that "perhaps the dawg foller'd him, and he had taken it along with him, to prevent being traced by its means."

At length, all this questioning being

over, the household settled down into a sort of strange calm. It seemed to us days since we had said "Good-night," and sought our rooms on that night, and yet it was only twenty-four hours ago; in that short time how much had taken place! On going over all the plate, etc., we missed many more things; and Mrs. Wilson, whose faith in Joe's honesty never wavered, began to think the poor boy might have been frightened at having slept through the robbery; and as he was so proud of having the plate used every day in his charge, when he discovered it had been stolen, he might have feared we should blame him so much for it, that he had run away home to his people

in his fright, meaning to ask his father, or his adored Dick, to return to me and plead for him. I thought, too, this was possible, for I knew how terribly he would reproach himself for letting anything in his care be stolen. I therefore made up my mind to telegraph to his father at once; but, not to alarm him, I said : —

“Is Joe with you? Have you reason to think he has gone home. Answer back.”

The answer came some hours after, for in those small villages communication was difficult. The reply ran thus:

“—We have not seen Joe; if he comes to-night will write at once. Hoping there is nothing wrong.”

So the surmise was a mistake, for Joe had money, and would go by train if he went home, and be there in two hours.

All the household sat up nearly all that night, or rested uncomfortably on sofas and armchairs; we felt too unsettled to go to bed, though worn out with suspense, and the previous excitement and fright. Officials and detectives came and went during the evening, and looked about for traces of the robbers, and before night a description of the stolen things, and a most minute one of Joe, were posted outside the police-stations, and all round London for miles. A reward of twenty pounds was offered for Joe, and my heart ached

to know there was a hue and cry after him like a common thief.

What would the old parents think ? and how would Dick feel?—Dick whose good counsels and careful training had made Joe what I *knew* he was, in spite of every suspicion.

The next day I felt sure he would come, and I went down into the room where he used to sleep, and saw Mrs. Wilson had put all in order, and fresh blankets and sheets were on the little bed, all ready for him. So many things put me in mind of the loving, gentle disposition. A little flower-vase I valued very much had been broken by Bogie romping with one of my nieces, and

knocking it down. It was broken to more than twenty pieces; and after I had plentifully tried to mend it myself, and my nieces, with still greater patience, had had their turn at it, we had given it up as a bad job, and thought it had long ago gone onto the dust-heap.

There were some shelves on the wall of Joe's room where his treasures were kept; and on one of these shelves, covered with an old white handkerchief, was a little tray containing the vase, a bottle of cement, and a camel's hair brush. The mending was finished, all but two or three of the smallest pieces, and beautifully done; it must have taken time, and an amount of patience that put

my efforts and those of the girls to shame; but Joe's was a labor of Love, and did not weary him. He would probably have put it in its usual place one morning, when mended, and said nothing about it until I found it out, and then confessed, in his own queer way, "Please, I knew you was sorry it was broke, so I mended it;" then he would have hurried away, flushed with pleasure at my few words of thanks and praise.

On the mantelpiece were more of Joe's treasures, four or five cheap photographs, the subjects quite characteristic of Joe. One of them was a religious subject, "The Shepherd with a little lamb on his

shoulders." A silent prayer went up from my heart that somewhere that same Good Shepherd was finding lost Joe, and bringing him safely back to us.

There were some pebbles he had picked up during a memorable trip to Margate with Dick, a year before I saw him; which pebbles he firmly believed were real "aggits," and had promised to have them polished soon and made into brooch and earrings for Mrs. Wilson.

There was a very old-fashioned photograph of myself that I had torn in half and thrown into the waste-paper basket. I saw this had been carefully joined together and enclosed in a cheap frame—the only one that could boast of being so

preserved. I suppose Joe could only afford one frame, and his sense of the fitness of things made him choose the Missis's picture to be first honored.

How sad I felt looking round the room! People may smile at my feeling so sad and concerned about a servant—a common, low-born page-boy. Ay, smile on, if you will, but tell me, my friend, can you say, if you were in Joe's position at that time, with circumstantial evidence so strong against you, poor and lowly as he was, are there four or five, or even two or three of your friends who would believe in you, stand up for you, and trust you, in spite of all, as we did for Joe?

I had gone up to my sitting-room, after telling Mary to light the fire in poor Joe's room, and let it look warm and cosey; for I had some sort of presentiment that I should see the poor boy again very soon—how, I knew not, but I have all my life been subject to spiritual influences, and have seldom been mistaken in them.

We were all thinking of going early to rest, for since the robbery none of us had had any real sleep. Suddenly the front door bell rang timidly, as if the visitor were not quite sure of its being right to pull the handle.

“Perhaps that's Joe,” said my sister.

But I know Joe would not ring that bell.

We heard Mary open the door, and a man's voice ask if Mr. Aylmer lived there.

"Yes," said Mary, "but he's abroad; but you can see Mrs. Aylmer."

Then came a low murmuring of voices, and Mary came in saying: —

"Oh, ma'am, it's Dick, Joe's brother; and he says may he see you?"

"Send him in here at once," I replied.

And in a moment Dick stood before me—Dick, Joe's beau-ideal of all that was good, noble and to be admired. I must say the mind-picture I had formed of Dick was totally unlike the reality. I had expected to see a sunburnt, big fellow, with broad shoulders and expressive features.

The real Dick was a thin, delicate-looking young man, with a pale face, and black straight hair. He stood with his hat in his hand, looking down as if afraid to speak.

"Oh, pray come in," I cried, going forward to meet him. "I know who you are. Oh, have you brought me any news of poor Joe? We are all his friends here, his true friends, and you must let us be yours too in this trouble. Have you seen him?"

At my words the bowed head was lifted up, and then I saw Dick's face as it was. If ever truth, honor, and generosity looked out from the windows of a soul, they looked out of those large

blue eyes of Dick's—eyes so exactly like Joe's in expression that the black lashes instead of the fair ones seemed wrong somehow.

“God bless you, lady, for them words,” said Dick; and before I could prevent it, he had knelt at my feet, caught my hand and pressed it to his lips, while wild sobs broke from him.

“Forgive me,” he said, rising to his feet, and leaning with one hand on the back of a chair, his whole frame shaking with emotion. “Forgive me for givin’ way like this; but I’ve seen them papers about our Joe, and I know what’s being thought of him, and I’ve come here ashamed to see you, thinkin’ you be-

lieved as the rest do, that Joe robbed you after all your goodness to him. Why, lady, I tell you, rather than I'd believe that of my little lad as I thrashed till my heart almost broke to hear him sob, for the only lie as he ever told in all his life; if I could believe it, I'd take father's old gun and end my life, for I'd be a beast, not fit to live any longer. And I thought you doubted him too; but now I hear you say you're his friend, and believes in him, and don't think he robbed you, I know now there's good folks in the world, and there's mercy and justice, and it ain't all wrong, as I'd come a'most to think as it was, when I first know'd about this 'ere."

“Sit down, Dick,” I said, “and recover yourself, and let us see what can be done. I will tell you all that has happened, and then perhaps you can throw some light on Joe’s conduct—you who know him so well.”

Dick sat down, and shading his eyes with his hand that his tears might not betray his weakness any more, he listened quietly while I went over the events of that dreadful night.

When I had finished, Dick sat for some moments quite silent, then with a weary gesture, passing his hand across his forehead, he remarked sadly:—

“I can’t make nothing of it; it’s a thing beyond my understanding. I’m

that dazed like, I can't see nothin' straight. However, what I've got to do is to find Joe, and that I mean to do; if he's alive I'll find him, and then let him speak for hisself. I don't believe he's done nothing wrong, but if he has done ever so little or ever so much, he'll '*own up to it whatever it is,*' that's what Joe'll do. I told him to lay by them words and hold to 'em, and I'll lay my life he'll do as I told him. I've got a bed down Marleybone way, at my aunt's what's married to a policeman; I'm to stay there, and I'll have a talk with 'em about this and get some advice. I know Joe's innercent, and why don't he come and say so? But I'll find him."

I inquired about the old people, and how they bore their trial.

“Father’s a’most beside hisself,” said Dick; and only that he’s got to keep mother in the dark about this, he’d have come with me; but mother, she’s a’bed with rheumatics, and doctor told father her heart was weak-like, and she musn’t be told, or it would p’raps kill her. She thinks a deal of Joe, does mother, being the youngest, and always such a sort of lovin’ little chap he were.” And here Dick’s voice broke again, and I made him go down to Mrs. Wilson, and have some refreshments before leaving, and he promised to see me again the first thing in the morning, when he had talked to his friend, the policeman.

Scarcely had Dick gone, when a loud, and this time firm ring, announced another visitor, and in a cab, too, I could hear. Evidently there was no going to rest early that night, as ten o'clock was then striking.

Soon, to my surprise, I heard a well-known voice, and Mary announced Dr. Loring, my husband's old friend, of whom I have already spoken.

"Well, my dear," he cried, in his pleasant, cheerful voice, that in itself seemed to lift some of the heaviness from my heart, "are you not astonished to see me at such an hour?"

"Astonished, certainly," I replied; "but very, very glad. You are always

welcome; and more than ever now, when we are in trouble and sorrow. Do sit down, and stay with me awhile."

"Yes, I will, for an hour, gladly," he said. "But there's something outside that had better be brought in first. You know I've only just arrived from Devonshire, and there are two barrels of Devonshire apples on that cab, one for you, and one for the wife; that is why you see me here, for I thought it would not be ten minutes out of my road to pass by here, and leave them with you, and so save the trouble of sending them by carrier to-morrow."

I rang for Mary, and the doctor suggested the apples being put somewhere

where the smell of them could not penetrate upstairs; for, as he truly remarked, "Though a fine ripe pippin is delicious to eat at breakfast or luncheon, the smell of them shut up in a house is horrible."

"I dare say Mrs. Wilson will find a place in the basement," I said; "for we don't use half the room there down there."

Having ordered the barrel to be stowed away, I soon settled my visitor comfortably in an armchair by the fire, with a cup of his favorite cocoa by his side.

"And now, my dear," said he, "tell me about this burglary that has taken place, and which has made you look as

if you wanted me to take care of you awhile, and bring back some color to your pale cheeks. And what about this boy? Is it the same queer little fellow who chose midnight to play his pranks in once before? I'm not often deceived in a face, and I thought this was an honest one. I"—

"So it was," I interrupted; "don't say a word until I've told you all, and you will"—

I had scarcely begun speaking, when a succession of the most fearful screams arose from downstairs, each rising louder and louder, in the extreme of terror. My sister, who had gone to her room, rushed down to me; the girls, in their

dressing-gowns, just as they were preparing for bed, followed, calling out, "Auntie! O Auntie! what is it? Who is screaming? What can be the matter? Hardly were they in the room when Mary rushed in, ghastly, her eyes staring, and in a voice hoarse with terror, gasped out, "Come! come! he's found! he's murdered! I saw him. He's lying in the cellar, with his throat cut. Oh, it's horrible!" Then she began to scream again.

The doctor tried to hold me back, but I broke from him, and ran downstairs, where I could find no one; all was dark in the kitchens, but there was a light in the area, and I was soon there, followed by Dr. Loring.

By the open cellar-door stood Mrs. Wilson, and the cabman with her. Directly she saw me, she called out, "Oh, dear mistress, don't you come here; it's not a sight for you. Take her away, Dr. Loring, she musn't see it."

"What is it?" I cried; "Mary says it's"—I could not say the words, but seizing the candle from Mrs. Wilson's hand, I went into the cellar.

The good doctor was close to me, with more light, by the aid of which we beheld, in the far corner, facing us, what seemed to be a bundle of blankets from which protruded a head, a horrible red stream surrounding it, and flowing, as it were, from the open mouth. One second

brought me close. It was Joe—Joe, with his poor limbs bound with cruel ropes, and in his mouth for a gag they had forced one of those bright red socks he would always wear. Thank God, it was only that red sock, and not the horrible red stream I had feared. He was dead, of course; but not such a fearful death as that.

The doctor soon pulled the horrid gag from his mouth, and the good-natured cabman, who evidently felt for us, helped to cut the ropes, and lift up the poor cold little form.

As they lifted him, something that was in the blankets fell heavily to the ground. It was poor Bogie's dead body,

stabbed in many places, each wound enough to have let out the poor dumb creature's life.

By this time help had arrived, and once more the police took possession of us, as it were.

Of course, *now* everything was explained. The burglars had evidently entered Joe's room, and Bogie, being in his arms, had barked, and wakened him. A few blows had soon silenced poor Bogie, and a gag and cords had done the same for Joe.

When the man saw me from the kitchen window he must have known that help would come soon, and to prevent Joe from giving an alarm they had hastily seized him, bed-clothes

and all, and put him into that cellar, to starve if he were not discovered.

Perhaps they did not really mean to kill the poor child, and if we had been in the habit of using that cellar we might have found him in a few hours or less; but, unfortunately, it was a place we never used; it reached far under the street, and was too large for our use. Our coal cellar was a much smaller one, inside the scullery; the door of poor Joe's prison closed with a common latch.

Had there been any doubt in the detective's mind as to Joe's guilt, he might have taken more trouble and searched for him, even there; but from the first everybody but ourselves had been sure

Joe had escaped with the burglars, so the cellar remained unsearched.

Mrs. Wilson, wishing to spare me the smell of the apples, thought that cellar, being outside the house, a very suitable place for them, and on opening the door had caught sight of something in the distant corner, and sent Mary to see what it was. Then arose those fearful shrieks we had heard, and Mary had rushed out of the cellar half mad with fright.

In less time than it has taken me to relate this, Joe was laid on the rug before the drawing-room fire, and I summoned courage to look on the changed face.

“Could that be Joe—so white, so drawn, so still?”

Dr. Loring was kneeling by the little form, chafing and straightening the poor stiffened arms, so bent with their cruel pinioning behind the shoulders.

“Doctor,” I said, “why do you do any more? Nothing can bring back the poor fellow, murdered while doing his duty.” Then I, too, knelt down, and took the poor cold hands in mine.

“Oh, my poor child!” I cried, “my little brave heart; who dared say you were false? Let those who doubted you look at you now, with dry eyes, if they can.”

“My dear,” said Dr. Loring, sud-

denly, "have you always hot water in your bath-room?"

"Yes, doctor," I said; "yes. Why do you ask? Do you mean—is it possible—there is life?" And I took Joe's little head in my arms, and forgot he was only a servant, only a poor, common little page-boy. I only know I pressed him to my breast, and called him by all the endearing names I used to call my own children in after years, when God gave me some, and kissed his white forehead in my joy at the blessed ray of hope.

No want of willing arms to carry Joe up-stairs. Mrs. Wilson had the bath filled before the doctor was in the room with his light burden.

“A few drops of brandy, to moisten the lips, first of all,” said the doctor, “then the bath and gentle friction; there is certainly life in him.”

Now my good sister's clever nursing proved invaluable. All that night we fought every inch of ground, as it were, with our grim enemy; the dear, good doctor never relaxed in his efforts to bring back life to the cramped limbs. The burglars had unknowingly helped to keep alight Joe's feeble spark of life by wrapping the blankets round him; they had meant, no doubt, to stifle any sound he might make; but by keeping him from actual contact with the stone floor, and protecting him from the cold,

they had given him his little chance of life.

Oh, how I blessed that kind thought of Dr. Loring's to bring me a barrel of apples! Had there been no occasion to open the cellar-door, Joe would have died before another morning had dawned—died! starved! What a horrible death! And to know that within a few steps were food, warmth and kind hearts—hearts even then saddened by his absence and grieving for him. What hours of agony he must have passed in the cold and darkness, hearing the footsteps of passers-by above his living tomb, and feeling the pangs of hunger and thirst. What weeks those three days must have

been to him in their fearful darkness, until insensibility mercifully came to his aid, and hushed his senses to oblivion.

Morning was far advanced when, at last, Joe's eyelids began to flutter, and his eyes opened a very little, to close again immediately; even the subdued light we had let into the room being too much for him to bear after so long a darkness; but in that brief glance he had recognized me, and seeing his lips move, I bent my head close to them.

Only a faint murmuring came, but I distinguished the words:

"Missis, I couldn't 'elp it! Forgive me. Say 'Our Father.'"

I knelt down, and as well as I could

for the tears that almost choked me, repeated that most simple, yet all-satisfying petition to the Throne of Grace.

Meanwhile the doctor held Joe's wrist, and my sister, at a sign from him, put a few drops of nourishment between the pale lips.

"My dear," at length said the doctor, "did you say the boy's brother was in London?"

"Yes," I replied, "but I have no address, as I expect him here this morning."

"That is well; he may be in time."

"In time?" I repeated; "in time for what? Is he dying? Can nothing be done?"

The good doctor looked again with moistened eyes on the little white face, and said sadly—

“I fear not, but the sight of this brother he seems to have such a strong love for may rouse him for a while. As it is, he is sinking fast. I can do no more. He is beyond human skill; but love and God’s help may yet save him. Poor little fellow, he has done his duty nobly, and even to die doing *that* is an enviable fate; but we want such boys as this to live, and show others the way.”

There was a slight sound at the room door, and on turning round I saw Dick—Dick with wild, dumb entreaty in his eyes.

I pointed to the bed, and with a whispered "Hush!" beckoned him to enter.

The shock of seeing his loved little lad so changed was too much for even his man's courage, for, with a cry he in vain strove to smother, he sunk on his knees with his face hidden in his hands.

But only for a moment he let his grief overcome him; then, rising, he took Joe's little form in his arms, and in a voice to which love gave the softest and gentlest tones said:—

"Joe, lad! Joe, little chap! here's Dick. Look at poor old Dick. Don't you know him? Don't go away without sayin' good-by to Dick wot loves you."

Slowly a little fluttering smile parted

the lips, and the blue eyes unclosed once more. "Dick!" he gasped; "I wanted to tell you, Dick, but—I—can't. I—ain't—forgot. 'Own—up—to—it—wotever'—I minded it all. Kiss me—Dick. God—bless—missis. Dick—take me—home—to—mother!"

And with a gentle sigh, in the arms of the brother he loved, Joe fell into a deep sleep, a sleep from which we all feared he would no more awake on earth, and we watched him, fearing almost to move.

Dick held him in his arms all that morning, and presently towards noon the doctor took the little wrist, and found the pulse still feebly beating; a smile lit up his good, kind face, and he whispered to me, "There is hope."

“Thank God!” I whispered back, and ran away into my own room to sob out grateful prayers of thanksgiving to heaven for having spared the life so nearly lost to us.

When I went back, Joe had just begun to awaken, and was looking up into his beloved Dick’s face, murmuring: “Why, it’s Dick. Are you a-crying about *me*, Dick? Don’t cry—I’m all right—I’m only so tired.”

And having drank some wine the doctor had ordered should be given him, he nestled close to Dick’s breast, and again fell into a sweet sleep, a better, life-giving sleep this time, for the faint color came to his pale little lips, and presently

Dick laid him down on the pillows, and rested his own weary arms. He would not move from Joe's side for fear he might wake and miss him, but for many hours our little fellow slept peacefully, and so gradually came back to life.

We never quite knew the particulars of the robbery, for, when Joe was well enough to talk, we avoided speaking of it. Dr. Loring said, "The boy only partly remembers it, like a dream, and it is better he should forget it altogether; he will do so when he gets stronger. Send him home to his mother for a while; and if he returns to you, let it be to the country house where there is nothing to remind him of all this."

Joe did get strong, and came back to us, but no longer as a page-boy; he was under-gardener, and his time was spent among his favorite flowers and pet animals, until one day Dick wrote to say his father had bought more land to be laid out in gardens, and if Joe could be spared he and Dick could work together, and in time set up for themselves in the business.

So Joe left us, but not to forget us, or to be forgotten. On each anniversary of my birthday I find a bunch of magnificent roses on my breakfast table—"With J. and R. Cole's respectful duty," and I know the sender is a fine, strong young market-gardener; but

sometimes I look back a few years, and instead of the lovely roses, and the big, healthy giver, I seem to see a faded, dusty bunch of wild-flowers, held towards me by the little hot hand of a tired child with large blue eyes, and I hear a timid voice say, "please 'm, it's J. Cole; and I've come to stay with yer!"

THE END.

GERALD AND MAX.

GERALD AND MAX.

DEAR little children: I am going to tell you a story about two little boys who were greedy. Perhaps you don't quite understand what it means, when people talk about being greedy, so I will try and tell you.

I dare say you have little friends who come and play with you, and sometimes stay to tea or dinner; and when you are all seated round the table with the nice things provided for you, perhaps some child cannot wait until he is helped, but reaches over and takes the largest cake

or biggest orange on the dish; or if a little girl is sitting next to him, instead of helping her first, as a gentleman should always do, he does not care if she goes without, so long as he gets the most for himself. This is being greedy.

I know a little boy who, whenever there is anything for dinner he likes very much, says, "When I have eaten all this may I have some more?" He does not even wait until he knows if he can eat all he has on his plate.

Greedy children are very dainty and wasteful, they want everything they see, and cannot eat half they ask for.

Now, Gerald and Max were greedy boys. If their mamma came up into the

nursery after her walk, they ran to her, and said, "What have you got for us, mammie? Have you any sweeties or cakes in your pocket?"

If their mamma said, "No, boys. I have nothing for you," they would look quite cross; and when their kind mamma had gone away, Nurse used to tell them how wrong it was for children to think only of what mamma would have in her pocket for them to eat, and not be glad to see her because she loved them and was always good to them, taking them on her knee and telling them stories, and always thinking of their happiness. Nurse told them of poor little children who had no kind mothers or

nurses, or anybody to be kind to them, no toys or books, and often no food, so that they cried with hunger, and were glad to pick up any hard crust from the road and be glad to eat it.

The boys listened very quietly to these stories, but they could hardly believe they were true. "Nurse makes up those stories to tell us," they would say; "for how can any little boys or girls be hungry when there are so many shops where they sell cakes and buns? Why don't they go in and ask for some?"

One evening Gerald and Max were at tea in the nursery. It was summer time, and on the table were strawberries from the garden. Nurse gave them each

some, and left a few on the dish. Now, these greedy boys saw some were left, and without waiting to see if Nurse had any, began to eat as fast as possible, Gerald trying to get done before Max, that he might have the few on the dish, and Max hoping Gerald would be done last, so that he might have them.

“Some more, please,” said both boys, at the same time pushing up their plates.

“No, dears,” said Nurse, “you have had enough fruit; if you eat any more you will be ill.”

“We have not had half enough,” cried Max. “There are plenty in the garden; I saw them to-day. I could eat twice as many, and you are a nasty cross nurse not to give us enough.”

“I could eat three platefuls,” said Gerald, “and I will have those on the dish;” and he reached across the table to get them. But Nurse put the dish away. And then these silly boys began to be very naughty: they threw their bread and butter on the floor, and spilt their milk, and were so rude and noisy, that presently Mrs. Oswald, their mamma, rang the nursery bell to know what all the noise was about. Nurse was obliged to say how naughty and greedy they had been, and they were punished by being put to bed without going downstairs to stay an hour in their mamma’s room, to look at pictures and play with their newest toys.

What silly boys they were! How much better it would have been had they been satisfied and not greedy! then they would have been down in their mother's room, hearing pretty stories and playing happily, instead of in bed, crying and sorry.

When the boys were asleep, Mrs. Oswald came up to look at them, as she always did before going to bed herself. She leaned over their little cots and kissed their faces, which were all red and wet with crying; she felt very sorry to have been obliged to punish them. It hurts mothers very much to punish their children, because they love them so dearly; but if little children are al-

lowed to be naughty, they grow up into bad men and women, and are never happy.

“Poor little boys!” said Mrs. Oswald, after kissing them softly. “I hope they will be good to-morrow, Nurse. It makes me sad to think my dear little ones have been naughty.”

Nurse said she would tell them how sorry their mamma had been, when they awoke next morning; and she did, while they were being dressed. Both boys said they meant to be very good that day, and they kissed Nurse, and begged her pardon for what they did the evening before. They were really dear, loving little fellows, but that one fault of greediness was always getting them into

trouble. Even this very morning, when they had made up their minds to be so good, they nearly quarreled because there was a little more porridge in one plate than the other; and Max wanted the most, and reached over to get it. Gerald said, "That's my plate;" and between them they nearly spilled the porridge on the floor. But Nurse reminded them of their promise to be good, and they were quiet again.

Breakfast was over, and the boys were out in the garden playing. Presently, Kemball, the gardener, passed across the lawn, on his way home to his dinner. The boys asked him if he had gathered any fruit for their dessert or tea.

“No, young gentlemen,” said Kemball. “I was told none would be wanted to-day.” The boys ran by his side a little way, asking about some rabbits he was going to bring them when they were old enough to take care of them; and Kemball asked them if they would like to go with him one day into the woods to gather wild strawberries. “There are plenty a little way off,” said Kemball; “and if you bring your baskets, we can fill them: but you must ask your mamma first, like good young gentlemen, and then I will take you.”

Then the gardener went away, leaving Gerald and Max just inside the garden-gate. Presently Gerald said,

"What was that Kembball said about strawberries growing close by in the woods, Max?"

"Why," said Max, "he told us there were basketfuls there, and we could gather them for ourselves."

"How jolly!" cried Gerald. "Why, we can eat as many as ever we like; and when we can't eat any more, we can fill our baskets, and take a lot home, in case we feel hungry again, can't we?"

What a greedy boy he was! You see, he never thought of taking any for mamma, or Nurse, only for himself. Max said he should take two baskets, and was sure he could fill them.

"Suppose," said Gerald, "we go now,

Max, and try to find the strawberries ourselves. Never mind any baskets: we can put them in our hats; or perhaps cabbages grow in the woods, or rhubarb, and we can use some of the big leaves to put the strawberries in. It is quite early, and we could get back before our dinner-time. Come on, Max. I know the way." And he pulled little Max by the arm, and opened the garden-gate.

Now, these boys had been told not to go outside the gate by themselves, and they had never done so until that day; but they were greedy, and when they thought of having as many strawberries as they could eat, they were so pleased, and in such a hurry to begin to eat them,

that they forgot all they had been told about going outside the gate alone, and were soon scampering across the fields as fast as their little legs could run towards some big trees that grew at the beginning of the wood.

Now, Max was younger than Gerald, and did whatever his brother told him; but when they were outside the gate, he said to Gerald, "Gerrie, I hope Nurse is not looking out of the window, for, you know, we are not to go out by ourselves only as far as the gate, and I'm afraid she'll be very cross, and perhaps tell mammie, and we shall be sent to bed again early, as we were last night, without going down to play in mammie's

room and hear stories. Do you think we had better go, Gerrie? Besides, I heard cook telling Nurse there were a lot of gypsies somewhere near, and you know sometimes they are bad people, and steal children."

"Rubbish!" cried Gerald. "You are a baby, Max, to be afraid. Why, if a gypsy wanted to steal *me*, I should just knock him down and give him a good beating, and then before he could get up I should run away! I am going to get a lot of strawberries, and perhaps we may find oranges, and peaches, and all sorts of nice things growing in the woods."

The silly boy did not know that

oranges and peaches do not grow in the woods; but little Max was quite pleased to go where he might find such good things, so he held Gerald's hand fast, and ran, too, until they were far into the wood, under the big trees, and could not see anything but bushes and all sorts of plants and flowers.

They did not want flowers, they were only anxious to find the strawberries, so they ran on and on until they were rather tired. They then remembered the wood was a big place, and they did not know in which part of it the strawberries grew.

Presently they sat down under a tree to rest their little legs, and Max, who

was only a very small boy, began to feel hungry, as it was nearly dinner time.

“Do you think, Gerrie,” said he, “we shall soon find the strawberries and peaches? I am so hungry.”

Gerald was hungry too, and had been wondering for a long time why they had not come to the strawberries. He was very tired, and did not know where to look, except under the bushes and among the grass. He thought perhaps they grew close to the ground, and it would be better to crawl on their hands and knees; he told Max this, and then the foolish boys began to crawl along, but they soon got their hands and faces and knees stung by nettles, and scratched

by prickly plants. In some places the ground was wet like mud, and they got covered with it; and in others, it was like sand and gravel with tiny sharp stones. Soon Max began to cry; he had cut his knee with a sharp stone, and the pain made him stop, and call out to Gerald, who was in front of him. "Gerrie! Gerrie dear! wait for me; I have hurt my knee," he called. "I can't!" cried Gerald. "I'm sure I can see some things growing on a bush over there, just like cherries; they must be good to eat. You stay where you are, Max, and I'll go and get some, and bring you some."

So poor tired little Max lay down on the ground—he was too tired to stand—

and Gerald went on to the bush, where he thought cherries grew. The bush was further off than he thought, and he began to fill his pockets, tearing down the berries as fast as he could; he wanted to get a lot before he began to eat them: greedy boys always like to have a lot of everything. At last he saw a big red one, and it looked so good he put it into his mouth; but it was not a cherry at all, but a hard berry of some kind, with such a hot, bitter taste, that he took it quickly out of his mouth and threw it away, and emptied his pockets of all he had gathered before.

“It’s no use my bringing you any, Max,” he called out. “They are nasty

bitter things; you can't eat them. Come on, Max. We had better go home now. Dinner will be ready, I should think."

He ran to the tree where he thought Max was, but could not see him. He called aloud, "Max! Max! where have you gone? Let us go home now. It's no use looking for the strawberries. Kemball must have meant some other wood; for they don't grow here."

But no Max answered, and Gerald ran a little way along a path under some great trees; but it was so dark that he could not see far, and Max was not there. Then Gerald got frightened. Where could his little brother be? He felt afraid to be alone in the woods. It was

getting so dark now, and there was a strange noise of the wind blowing the trees about. Presently it began to rain, and then he tried to run back towards home; but he did not know the way out of the wood, and at last, after running about, calling and shouting, he was so tired, cold, and wet, he could not stand or call out any more, but sat down under the tree and began to cry. He was very hungry, and thought of all the nice things at home for his dinner, and how glad he would be if he could only have a biscuit or a slice of bread. How thirsty he was, too. If he could only have a mug of water! But there was nothing for him. Soon it was nearly dark, and

he thought of all the stories he had heard about bears, tigers, and wolves, and wondered if any wild beasts lived in these woods, and if they would find him, and eat him. How sorry he was he had been so greedy, and not waited until Kemball showed the way to where the strawberries grew! Poor little Gerald, he was being punished for his greediness.

When it was quite dark, and he could not see even trees, he began to say his prayers, for he remembered once, when Max was a tiny baby, and very ill, he had seen his mamma kneel by his bed, and she told him she was asking God to make little brother Max well, and Max

had got well; so perhaps, if he asked God, He would show him the way out of the wood. He knelt down, and shutting his eyes so as not to be frightened by the waving branches of the trees, he put up his hands, and said, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child, and please tell me the way out of the wood, for I am very tired, and my head pains me, and Max is lost. I'm sorry we were so greedy. Please, dear God, answer me. I am going to sleep now, and please send an angel to take me home when I wake up. Amen."

Then poor Gerald crept under some dead leaves, and presently fell asleep, although at first he was so cold and his

head pained him so badly he could only cry and wish he were at home; but his tired little eyes closed at last, and he was sound asleep.

It seemed he had only been asleep a very little while, when he felt something touch him, and awoke. At first he thought he was at home, but in a moment he found he was in a strange place, lying on some straw in a dark room, only lighted by some wood burning in the corner and a candle stuck in a bottle on a shelf. He tried to sit up, but his back and legs ached so, he could not bear to move. Close to him, on the straw, a big boy was lying fast asleep, and in his hand a piece of bread he had been eating.

Poor Gerald was so terribly hungry that, when he saw the bread, he could not help trying to take it from the boy's hand, although it was a dirty, hard crust many little dogs would not care to eat; but he had scarcely touched it, when the boy awoke, and, seeing what Gerald was trying to do, gave him a hard blow with his fist and a kick, saying—

“What are you taking my bread for? I'll teach you not to touch what isn't yours.” And again he struck poor little Gerald, who began to scream with pain and fright.

Then a man and woman, who had been in some corner where Gerald could not see them, came out, and began to

ask him who he was, and said they had found him asleep under a tree, and had brought him to their hut. Gerald told the man his name; and the woman said—

“Oh, I know the Oswalds’ house. It’s that big place with the garden close to the road.”

“Why,” said the man, “it must be a good three mile from where we found the little chap; and now, what are we going to do with him ?”

The woman caught hold of Gerald, telling him to stand up and let her look at him.

The poor child tried to stand, but his legs were so stiff and sore with walking,

and he had taken cold from sleeping on the wet grass, so that he really could not stand.

The woman pulled him up, saying, "Now, young sir, do as you're bid, or it will be worse for you."

"Please, ma'am," said Gerald, "I can't—my legs won't stand; and, please, I'm so very hungry. Pray don't beat me. I do want something to eat and drink so very badly." And the poor little fellow crawled over to the woman, and tried to take her hand; but she gave him a push, and he fell down, he was so weak and ill.

The man was drinking some coffee out of a tin mug, and he said to his wife—

“Here, give him a taste of this and a bit of bread, missus; it won’t do to starve him, or we shall get into trouble.” And the man took the loaf of bread to cut a slice for Gerald. But the woman took it out of his hand, saying crossly—

“What are you doing? Don’t cut that loaf for him; there’s plenty of bread good enough for him in the bag.” Then she got a bag from the corner of the room, and turned it out on the top of the box that was used for a table. Then she lifted Gerald up, and sat him by the box, telling him to eat.

Poor Gerald could hardly lift the mug, his hands shook so much, but he managed to drink a little of the cold, bit-

ter coffee; but when he looked at what he was to eat, he felt quite sick. There were old dirty crusts, bones, pieces of meat and fat, pie-crusts, and stale biscuits, all sorts of things mixed up with cold potatoes. He felt he could not touch such food; but he was so very hungry, he knew he must eat something. How he thought of his pretty nursery, and the clean white cloth spread on the table, the nice bread and butter, and his pretty white-and-gold basin full of milk, the plates of gooseberries, raspberries, or some kind of fruit! And he remembered the stories Nurse had told him—stories he thought could not be true—about poor children who had only dirty

stale crusts to eat, and were glad even to get those. He looked at the stale food on the box, and began to feel he was a poor boy like Nurse talked about now, for he had nothing else to eat, and nobody to be kind to him. He put down his head on his hands, and began to cry; he could not bite the hard crust, though he tried. The woman snatched it away from him, and put it in a tin basin; then she poured some coffee on it and some hot water, and, giving him a spoon, told him to make haste and eat it. There was no milk or sugar in the coffee, and it was very nasty, but little Gerald was so hungry he ate it all, and could have eaten some more, but the woman cleared

it all away, and told him to lie down again, and not move, as she was going out.

The big boy who had struck Gerald was eating his breakfast from the pieces in the bag; and Gerald hoped he would go out too, for he was such a cross boy, and might try to fight him: but when the man and woman went, they told the boy to look after Gerald, and see he did not run away.

“How can I help it?” said Jim. “If he wants to go, what can I do with him?”

“Oh,” said the woman, “we’ll soon prevent that;” and she found a piece of rope, and tied it round Gerald’s arm, and then to the iron handle of the big

box they used for a table. "Now he can't go far," she said. "And if he screams, or calls out when anybody passes by, just you tell me, and I'll flog him when I come back with this;" and she held up a great stick, and shook it in Gerald's face. Then she went out, closing the door, leaving Gerald and Jim alone.

Now I must tell you what Max was doing all this time. You remember Gerald left him sitting by a tree, when he went to get the berries he thought were good to eat, and that looked like cherries. Well, poor little Max waited a long time for his brother to come back, and thought he would try to go to sleep,

he felt so tired and hungry; but the tree hurt his back when he leaned against it, so he went over to another place, where there was a bank covered with soft green moss. It felt cool and pleasant to his sore, tired little feet, and was just like a soft pillow for his head, so he closed his eyes and was asleep in a moment. When Gerald called him he did not hear, and a big bush hid him, so that Gerald could not find him. You remember Gerald fell asleep too, after running a long way, trying to find Max. The man and his wife found him, but did not see little Max behind the bush, so they only carried Gerald away, while Max slept soundly.

It was quite dark when Max awoke, and he was very frightened at finding himself alone in the woods. He called Gerald several times, but no one answered. Some big birds flew out of the bushes, and made him scream with fright. He was only a very little boy, and had never been out by himself before, even in the daytime, close to his home, so no wonder he was frightened all alone in the woods, and night coming on. He was cold and wet; his little shoes had come off when he was crawling along, and his thin socks were in holes from walking on the rough ground. His hat had blown away somewhere, when he first ran into the wood; and as for his frock, it had been a

pretty white one when he left home, but now it was so dirty and torn, his blue sash so wet and spoiled, no one could tell what color it had been. His pretty curls were tangled with leaves and bits of moss clinging to them, his poor little knees cut and bleeding, and his hands and arms scratched and sore. Altogether he was a very miserable little boy; and as he sat by himself in the dark, the stars looked down on him, and he thought he knew one very bright one—it was just like one he could see when he was in his little cot, and called, “My star.”

He began to think of that little cot, and his dear mammie’s loving kisses when she said “Good-night” to her

dear boys; and, holding up his little arms to his star, he cried aloud for "Mammie! mammie! Do come, mammie! I am all alone by myself. Gerrie has gone, and everybody is such a long way off. We were greedy, and wanted a lot of strawberries, that's what we ran into the woods for, and we got lost. Please try and hear me, mammie dear." Then he called louder and louder, but his throat got sore, and he could not call any more. The trees looked like big giants holding out their arms to him, and he hid his face in fear. Presently, when he was just going to lie down and try to sleep again, he heard a dog bark, and saw a light coming through the trees a

long way off. He sat up and called as loudly as he could, but in a very weak little voice now, very different to the shouts he had given when Gerald and he first ran away from home.

“Nell! Nell!” he called. Nell was the name of a big dog belonging to Mrs. Oswald. “Nell! is that you? Come and find me, Nell!”

Presently the barking got louder, and the lights closer, and somebody said, “Hie! good dog, find him, find him!” and Nell bounded through the trees on to Max, as he sat on the ground, and began licking him, and jumping round him, and doing everything a dog could to show how glad he was. Then Max

saw John, the footman, the coachman, several men, and a policeman following Nell, and he knew they had come to find him. He was so thankful and glad, but so tired and ill, that he could only cry out, "Oh, John, I am lost; please make haste and take me home."

"But where's Master Gerald?" said John. "He was with you, Master Max, we thought."

"I don't know," said Max; "he went away ever so long ago, and never came back." And then poor Max put his head down on John's shoulder, and the lights and the men seemed to go away, and he could not see or hear anything more.

“Poor little fellow!” said John, “he has been too long without food, and is going to faint.”

“Here!” said the policeman, “Mrs. Oswald slipped this parcel into my hand as we was coming away, in case they was hungry, as they might be, if they’d strayed into the woods.”

The parcel was a big slice of sponge cake, and a flask with some milk, and something else in it, that made it do Max good directly he drank it. He opened his eyes, and John put some of the sponge cake into the milk, and fed him with it.

“What is best to do?” said John. “I don’t like to go back without Master

Gerald, and yet it seems as if we ought to get this poor little fellow home, and into his bed at once, or we shall have him laid up with fever; his clothes are dripping wet, and he's shivering with cold."

"See here, Mr. John," said the policeman. "You go back home with that child, and me and two or three of the men will take the dog with us, and see if we can come across the other little chap. He may have wandered much further on; this forest reaches miles."

"All right," replied John. And then, carrying poor little Max, who was going to sleep again, John walked towards home, while the others, taking Nell with them, went the other way.

Soon little Max was in his dear mamma's arms, and his poor little cold limbs tenderly washed in a nice warm bath. Nurse kept crying out with pity and surprise when she saw the dear little pink feet she had kissed so often, and kept so warm and clean, all cut and bleeding, and covered with black mud; the pretty hair she had brushed and curled so nicely in the morning, tangled and dirty; and the rosy cheeks so pale and wet with tears.

"Oh, my dear little Master Max," cried Nurse, "all this has come from being greedy. Why were you not satisfied with what Nurse could give you? Why did you want more? How I wish

I knew how to make you give up being greedy!”

“Perhaps, Nurse,” said Mrs. Oswald, “he will be a better boy now, when he remembers the pain and trouble he has had.”

So Max was washed, and put to bed; and after drinking some delicious warm arrowroot, he put his head on his soft pillow, and was soon fast asleep.

Gerald was left tied to the box in the hut, as you remember, so that he should not run away. When the boy Jim had finished his meal, he began playing with some bits of wood and stones, but every now and then he looked at Gerald, and saw he was holding his head with his hands, and crying quietly.

“What do you cry for?” he said. “What’s the use of crying?—don’t make anything better.”

“I can’t help it,” said Gerald; “my head hurts me so much, and my legs ache. I do want to go home. Oh, do you think they will take me home?”

“I don’t know,” said Jim. “You see, if your people offer some money to any one as finds you, father will take you back so as to get it.”

“I’ve got more than five shillings in my money-box at home,” said Gerald; “and if you will take me home, I’ll give it all to you.”

“I daren’t do that,” said Jim. “Mother said I was to see you didn’t

run away, and I've got to. Mother's awful cross when I don't mind her; and she just hits me over my head with that big stick—and it hurts, I can tell you. Whatever made you leave your home and get lost? What did you come into the woods for?"

"I wanted to find some strawberries," said Gerald.

"Couldn't you get none at home?" asked Jim.

"Yes, we did have some," replied Gerald, "but not so many as we wanted; and we heard lots grew in the wood, so we wanted to find them, and eat as many as we liked."

"Ah," said Jim, "you was greedy,

that's what you was, and you'd better have been satisfied with what you got. I dare say now you had a fine breakfast up there, where you live—better than you had to-day. I've heard mother say as some little chaps has eggs, as well as bread and butter and all sorts of jam; but I can't hardly believe that's true."

"Yes, it is," replied Gerald, "we often had all that."

"Oh my!" cried Jim. "I wish I was you. I never had a proper breakfast like that in all my life, and never shall have, I don't think. Why, sometimes, when we can't get no work, father, mother, and me has had to do without anything, except perhaps a turnip or two

we stole out of a field, and any apples we could find under the trees in the orchards. Father puts me over the wall to pick 'em up, and I am just frightened for fear I'll be caught; and there's big dogs comes after me sometimes, and makes me run pretty quick, I can tell you."

"But that was stealing," said Gerald.

Jim held his head down, and looked ashamed; then he said, "Yes, I suppose it was; but if you're so hungry you feels as if a big wolf was inside you, bitin' and scratchin', and he won't be quiet and leave off till you get something to eat, you don't mind picking up a few apples and turnips, even if they ain't yours to

take. You don't know what hunger is. You've only gone without your food half a day; and I've often gone two whole days, and never had nothing but what I could pick up like that."

Gerald listened to Jim, and felt very sorry for him. He remembered the nice food Nurse often got ready for breakfast, and how sometimes he and Max would grumble, and say it was not good, and they didn't like gooseberry jam, they wanted raspberry; and would push their plates away, and be rude and cross with nurse. He knew now how true the stories were she told of poor boys who had no nice things at all. Why, here was Jim, who had nothing sometimes to

eat, and was beaten with a big stick if he did not do as he was told! Yes, it was all true. And how he wished he could run straight home and put his arms round Nurse's neck, and kiss her, and tell her how sorry he was for being a naughty greedy boy! But it was no use wishing; now he was in this dirty hut, far away from his home, and perhaps he should have to stay and be beaten like Jim, and be hungry and dirty always. When he thought of this, he could not help crying again, and asking Jim once more to take him home. But Jim told him he dare not; and so they sat there a long while, watching little mice and beetles run about the floor,

and listening to the birds singing outside.

Presently the door was opened with a bang, and the man and woman came in very quickly. "Come!" she said to Gerald, "I'm going to take you home; mind, you are to keep quiet, and not say one word, only what I tell you. And you, Jim, when we're gone, lock the door; and if anybody comes, keep them as long as you can outside, and pretend you were asleep and didn't hear them knock. They are sure to ask if there's a child here, and you say father and me found him outside the door, and brought him in and fed him, and have taken him home ever so long ago."

Jim said, "All right, mother." And then the man, taking Gerald in his arms, and the woman walking by his side, they started off down a steep path through the very thickest part of the forest.

It seemed to Gerald a very long while before they came out of the wood, but at last there was a road, and a man with a horse and cart waiting. Gerald was lifted in, and the man took the reins, and soon they were driving along very fast, the man making the horse gallop.

"We must get there quick," he said to the woman, "before the others get back; and we'll have to hide a bit, in case the little chap tells how long we kept him in the hut. Mind you be in a desperate

hurry to get back to the sick child you've left at home alone."

"I know what to say," said the woman; "you leave me alone. A good job; Ned Rowe happened to hear the men talking of how they found the other youngster, and how they'd sent some men on to look for this one."

"Yes," replied the man, "if they'd found this one with us, we should have been taken up for stealin' him, sure enough; but now, we've found him, and are taking him home, ain't we?"

"Certainly we are," laughed the woman.

Presently, Gerald was delighted to see his home a little way off, and soon they

drove up to the door; and in a moment his dear mother, nurse, and all the other servants were round him, kissing him, and ready to cry with joy at seeing him.

“Oh!” said Mrs. Oswald to the man and woman, “my good people, where did you find my darling child?”

“Well, ma’am,” said they, “we heard a noise outside our place, which is miles away from here, and there was this little chap almost dead with cold and hunger. Me and my wife took him in and gave him something to eat and drink, and as he could tell where he lived, we borrowed a horse and cart and brought him home; and now you’ve got him safe back, we’ll be going, for we’re anxious

to get back to our own little boy, who is ill, and the wife's had to leave him by hisself so as to help me bring back young master there."

"Oh! you kind woman," said Mrs. Oswald. "I don't know how to thank you." She took some gold from her purse and put it into the woman's hand. Then they drove off as quickly as they could, and Gerald was carried upstairs, and laid in his own little bed beside Max, who was too tired and ill to want to talk.

The boys were both ill for many days; they had taken cold, and had bad sore throats and pains all over them. They had suffered so much, there was no need to scold them for being so naughty.

Gerald got well before Max, and the first time he got up to breakfast there was a dish of fruit on the table. He said to Nurse, "Nurse! do you think if I gave everybody some first, and then only take very little for myself, I shall not be called greedy any more? I do want you to say I am not greedy."

"I am sure, Master Gerald," said Nurse, "I will say so very gladly; for I have seen how sorry you are, and I don't think you will ever forget all the trouble greediness brought to you and all of us."

So Gerald and Max became good little boys, and a long time after, when summer came again, Kemball, the ge-

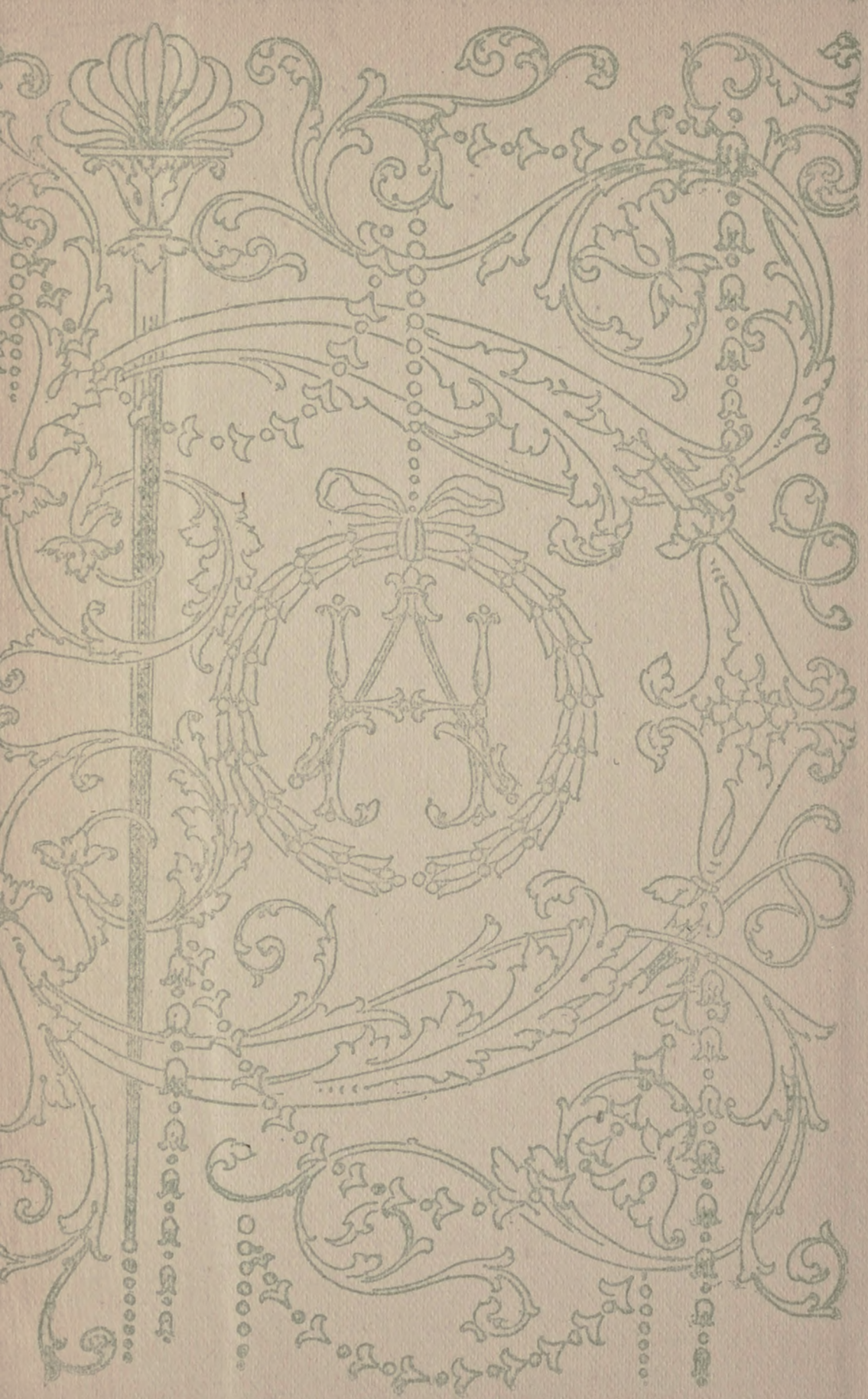
dener, took them into the woods, and showed them where the strawberries grew; they gathered their baskets full, and carried them home without wanting to eat them all, as they used to do. Gerald wanted to find the hut and to see poor Jim again, but they could never find it. There were some very great storms in the winter, and perhaps the hut was blown down, and Jim and his father and mother had to go somewhere else. Gerald was sorry, for he would often say to Nurse, that Jim was a very poor boy, and would like some proper breakfast, like Max and himself.

Now I hope, if any greedy little boys or girls read this story, they will try not

to be greedy any more, in case they get into such trouble as Gerald and Max did.

THE END.





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